

FUELLED BY SUGAR, POWERED BY HEART

SUGAR POWER

INTERVIEW BY BIANCA ZEN
IMAGES AND PORTRAIT COURTESY OF SUGAR POWER



"Honestly, I have given up on my real name. It is too hard to pronounce or to remember."

She sits like a fairy from the tale of Peter Pan and the Lost Boys. Dark and thick long lashes like pretty cobwebs on the cornices of a castle trim her big eyes. Pouty and flirtatious, glossy but nude lips shine with pride and wit sitting on her heart-shaped face. Angled in a posture on a red loadstool near a sparkling pond, her fairy wings flutter just as she gazes onto my path. Her long blond wig fits like a crown while underneath, the mass of brain dances with creativity and a power to impress. She may be wearing high stilettos, sex-kitten heels with straps that wrap around her tattooed ankle. Yes...

That was what I thought of her when I first saw her collages. I thought of the artist as such. Not in a provocative way but as alluring, captivating and mysterious a lure as her illustrations were to me. Like what Chanel No 5 did to Marilyn Monroe.

I was hit on the head and the concussion lasted for years. Sugar Power has that kind of power over me - this girl and her golden magic dust of illustrations give me the "sugar high" up till this day. I do not know what kind of coke she used in her collages but addiction, obsession and dependence for her art grew in me.

There is no way one could describe the way certain music makes one feel, and so I do not think I could make anyone understand what the intricacy of her simple collage has done to me.

So please indulge yourself. Register yourself at the door and get your free shot of sex on the beach from the bunny waitresses in roller-skates. Welcome to Sugar Power's die-hard fan club.



Promotional image - Alice falling down the rabbit hole



Illustration for The London Times UK's Sex Question section



Illustration for the Toyota Prado, Saatchi & Saatchi, Sydney

Hey you... How did you start your career in the illustration and design industry?

I started finger-painting in the backyard when I was three. I remember that day so vividly. It was my first memory. Smearing paint on a giant easel in the back garden.

I fell in love. Nothing made me happier.

Sugar Power is not your real name. No one is born with such a beautiful and apt name. What is the story behind Sugar Power?

Honestly, I have given up on my real name. It is too hard to pronounce or to remember. Plus, Sugar is a good ice-breaker. It is memorable. It describes my obsessions aptly. It is my alter-ego, which is a cross between Tank Girl and Pippi Longstocking.

I make comic books with Sugar Power and sneak her into a lot of my illustrations. I also have a small clothing and accessories line called Sugar Power, which I would like to expand into a larger brand with dolls, more accessories and other books.

Why the name "Sugar"?

When I try telling people my real name they reply "Okay, Sugar". It just sticks. It is especially funny now living in Mexico. I know quite a few people and whenever I hear "Hola Sugar!" from across the road I have to smile.

People just like to say it. And I think, maybe it was just meant to be.

You move and travel a lot. Tell us a little about your journey in the world.

I am restless. There is so much to see and because I use so much of my own photography in my work, it is all fuel for the fire. Also, I am very restless. Did I mention I am restless?

Where is/was the best place for you and your illustrations?

I think where I am living now in Mexico. But who knows I might live in Iceland next year or Fiji or the moon, I hear that is big.

How would you describe your signature in your design?

Eclectic, naughty, sweet, honest, funny and sometimes very lascivious.

What does collage mean to you?

I've always been drawn to more confidential forms of collage. Like diary entries. People like Joseph Cornell, Robert Rauchenberg, Candy Jernigan and Hannah Hoch.

But I am drawn to anything intimate and honest. Whatever form it comes in. Certain conversations, songs, installations, sculpture, people on the street, chaos theory, a homemade hamburger. It is all collage.



Volkswagen billboards, Grabarz & Partner

Your collage elements comprise of every, and anything. How does the thought process of one collage come about?

Instinct. I work laterally and cannot function in a straight line. So I tend to collect intuitively and then make formal rather than literal sense out of the images. Sometimes this gets me in trouble and I have to make the meaning more obvious. But many of my clients hire me because of what I do, so I get away with murder sometimes. Without hurting anyone, of course.

How receptive do you think clients are to collage work in comparison with classic illustrations?

Good question. I feel lucky because the people I work with really love my work. They are ecstatic and I am ecstatic and that always makes for a good project.

I am never approached by anyone lukewarm. I think that working in a rather unique way compared to classical illustration is a bonus because people either love it or don't. And I prefer to work with people who love it so we end up with an ideal match.

You recently won several awards. Tell us more about them.

Wow! This was my best year. Honestly.

I am very grateful. I feel like this dorky little girl just trying to make dioramas and pictures and movies but this year all my dreams have come true.

I won the Gold prize at the Advertising Awards in Montreux, Switzerland for a series of billboards I did for Volkswagen. Of course Switzerland is not the easiest place to win anyone's heart. (I am half-Swiss so I feel like I can not only get away with saying this, I actually know this for a fact).

The same Volkswagen series won the ONE SHOW – Merit Award, the ADC Germany – Merit Award, D&AD – "IN BOOK", it has been in *Lürzer's Archive's* "Best Ads of the Year" and *American Illustration* 27.

I also consider joining Anna Goodson's group an award.

Your website is called the Lint Museum. It looks like Disneyland but the explicit version.

Ha. That is cute. I am updating it now so it is going to become even more explicit. Look out. Maybe it will be X-rated soon. I doubt it though, because there is too much love and little white bunnies.

You like a lot of underground singers and you also have a knack for literature and poetry. What do you like most about Dostoevsky, E.E. Cummings and Nick Cave?

You are drinking straight from the source with those boys. Direct contact. I love that.

Can we add Whitman and Rilke and Mallarme and Neruda and Sappho and Lorca and Emily Dickinson to the list? Just for a start. For anyone interested.

What or who is your muse?

My muse is Amber. She lives in San Francisco. She is the kindest and most alive circus freak I have ever known. We met in Mexico ten years ago and she has never stopped inspiring me. Not for one second. I hardly ever get to see her but when I do all my molecules are animated into better molecules, like in those weird liquid soaps or bubble tea or a lava lamp.

What do you do to take your mind off work? What do you do in your free time?

I love to be immersed in liquids. Swimming, bathing, being rained on, and drinking. I love being surrounded by water.

I like to float. I like being in the middle of nowhere. I like expensive hotels. I like to read and I love kissing. I like watching people breathe and smoke and talk.

What would you say makes a good collage?

Heart. For me, it has to be heartfelt. Technical bravado is amusing, like TV, but real heart has a kind of integrity that is unparalleled and I never tire of. I love Stefan Sagmeister because he is able to do everything (or at least try to) with heart and a kind of cleverness that never leaves your mind. That is important.

I don't think I work like that. I am a hopeless romantic and just follow what I love, but he does the same with a twist that gets my knickers in a knot. Whoops! Am I allowed to say that?

What were the three weirdest and most disgusting things you have used in your collages?

I tend not to put weird or disgusting things in my collages, by my standards, at least. Although I suppose some people would be offended by scars, spit, or coitus. But, come on, those are all really lovely things. Like fresh flowers and their slow wilting; all very much part of life.

You have recently been made part of Anna Goodson Management's team. You are also represented by several agencies in several continents. How important are agents to you?

I just have to say, joining Anna's group is a dream come true. Honestly, I have been politely stalking her for years. I am in awe of her motivation and prowess.

With agents in general, I think they are essential at this point in my career because I am no longer just trying to get the work out there but doing the work full time. Agents take care of a great percentage of the promotion that I do and mine, luckily, have fantastic reputations.

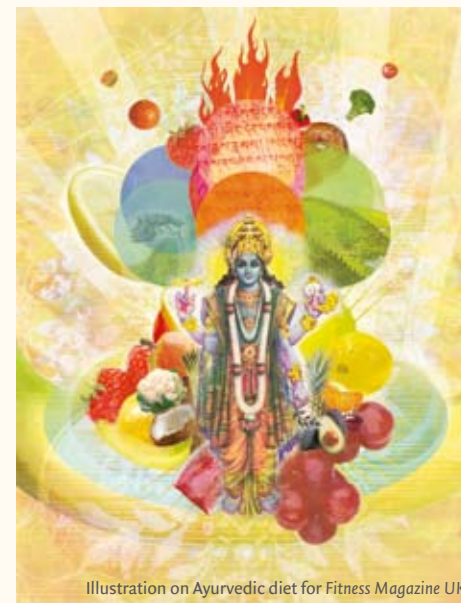


Illustration on Ayurvedic diet for Fitness Magazine UK

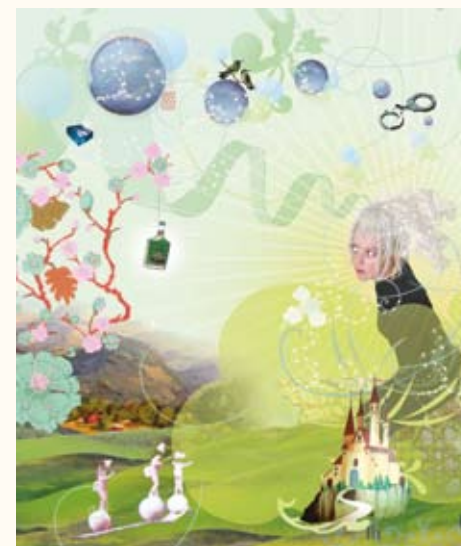


Illustration for Fashion Wonderland Book, Victionary Publishing, Hong Kong



Illustration for Ascent magazine's article on intuitive reading

I am honoured to be affiliated with Anna Goodson (North America), Eye Candy (UK), Margarethe Hubauer (Germany) and Creative Syndicate (Paris). They are amazing, hardworking people whom I wholly adore.

Education is very important to you. Bill Gates made it well with no paper. Paul Ince was made to coach a soccer team for the EPL with no proper qualifications. Do you believe in chances and opportunities or the proper system of study work more?

I have a Master's in Animation, a Bachelor's degree in Art History, and a Diploma in Digital Art and I wouldn't give up those experiences for anything. Being in school is such a great time to germinate and be challenged. I loved going to school and the people I met and having time to play with ideas and materials.

Name me one item, any item, that would describe you and your life perfectly. Why?

Well, my life is pretty intricate and always changing and very intimate. So I would have to choose the obvious, lint.

What can I say? It is the perfect metaphor for the collection of all those things close to you during your day. It contains the hair of the person you love, pieces from where you walked and what you did that day and it is always metamorphosing.

It is the perfect collage.

Some of your favourite things in life include chain smokers, Coco Chanel, wigs, feathers and high heels. That makes two of us. Can you please design us a collage that involves all these things for our iSh readers please?

Wow. Now I am impressed! I've never known anyone who shared these odd affinities. How about a chipped tooth or a gold one? Now that makes my heart sing.

Thank you, Bianca Zen, for the wonderful, thought-provoking and fun interview. I have mustered the most heartfelt collage I could to encapsulate these elements and our interview. Hope you like it.



For more information on Sugar Power's work, visit www.lintmuseum.com or www.agoodson.com.